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Winter 2002

Report to the 32nd District

Dear Neighbors,

With the current 2002 legislative session now underway, we are taking on many daunting issues in Olympia. Tackling our state's transportation problems, boosting our economy, and cutting state spending are among the toughest issues we are attempting to address.

As you well know, our transportation system is in crisis. Traffic congestion is exhausting our patience, wasting our time and money, harming our environment, and hurting our economy. The governor has recently presented a plan to address traffic gridlock that includes raising the gas tax by 9 cents per gallon over three years, and increasing fees on trucks and newly purchased automobiles. This proposal would add as many as 20,000 jobs in road construction and repair, addressing our gridlock while stimulating our state's economy.

This session we plan to pass a series of efficiencies and reforms to streamline the way the Department of Transportation (DOT) operates. Then, we will be taking a close look at the Governor's plan along with several other proposals including whether to send a transportation package to a public vote. I am committed to passing a transportation package this session that addresses both revenues and efficiencies.

This session will prove to be one of the most important in many years and your participation is critical. On that note, I would like to thank those of you who responded to the transportation survey I sent out earlier this fall. It is very helpful to read your comments and hear people's opinions regarding this critical state issue. Due to the tremendous volume of responses, I am not able to respond individually to each of you but sincerely appreciate hearing from you. A summary of the survey results is included in this newsletter.

Please feel free to contact me at any time regarding issues that concern you. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth Kagi".

Ruth Kagi

State Representative Ruth Kagi

Getting Our State Moving Again-

Transportation Survey Results

The transportation survey I sent to you last fall has yielded some interesting results regarding how constituents feel about the current transportation dilemma. While the 1,501 individuals who responded have varying perspectives on the issues and differing priorities for fixing them, it is clear that everyone is frustrated and patience is wearing thin.

In response to the question of how people get to work, roughly 74% of those who responded said that they drive to work by themselves, and 4% said they commute by carpool. 22% of the respondents said that they commute by bus.

Evidence of time and energy wasted in traffic is shown by the fact that only 30% of the respondents said their commute was less than 20 minutes. The largest majority, approximately 43%, said their commute lasted from 20-40 minutes. 27% said their time traveling to work lasted anywhere from 40 minutes to over an hour.

Not surprisingly, traffic congestion was the most common complaint about our transportation system, receiving 82% of survey participants' votes. Traffic lights not being synchronized were identified by 52% of the respondents as an important problem; approximately 34% felt that the lack of public transportation was critical.

72% of the total survey respondents said that they would like to see the state address the worst chokepoints in order of priority. 52% felt we could do more in the area of carpooling, staggered work hours and mass transit alternatives. 40% of the respondents felt the DOT should be setting, and subsequently meeting, pre-determined benchmarks of progress. 34% felt transportation taxes should be spent locally, and 14% of those answering the survey felt we should be entering into contracts for private companies to build and levy tolls.

Regarding possible sources for increased spending revenue, 52% of the respondents felt that revenues should come from higher taxes on gasoline. Increased fees and permits were identified as the second most feasible solution, receiving 40% of people's approval. Other sources of revenue made up the rest. Only 6% felt no additional revenues should be devoted to transportation.

Though this was an unscientific survey, there is a clear consensus among those who did respond that the transportation situation is worsening and we need to make major new investments in transportation. As I discussed in my last newsletter, we basically are funding transportation at the same level as we did 20 years ago, after two decades of dramatic population

growth. Now we must address this issue in a reasonable and thoughtful way. Thank you again for your input. It will be a big help as we sort through the options during the session.

Survey Highlights

1,501 respondents

74% of respondents drive alone to work

22% commute by bus

4% carpool

30% commute to work in 20 minutes or less

43% commute to work in 20-40 minutes

27% commute to work in 40 minutes or more

82% are concerned about traffic congestion

52% want streetlights synchronized

34% want increased public transportation

72% want the worst traffic chokepoints addressed first

52% want increased emphasis on carpooling, staggered work schedules, and more mass transit options

40% want increased accountability from DOT

52% of respondents support increasing the gas tax to pay for transportation improvements

40% support increased fees on cars and trucks to pay for transportation projects

6% oppose any revenue increases to address transportation

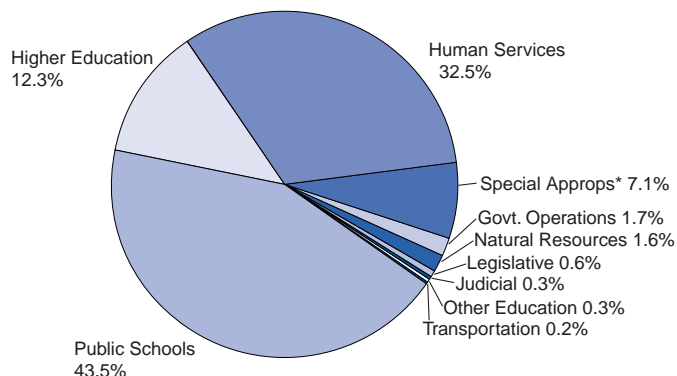


Report to the 32nd District

The Budget Crunch

The other major issue awaiting us this session is revising the state budget. Last June, we passed a budget that set expenditures at \$22.8 billion. 55.8% of these funds went towards our state's public schools; 32.5% were allocated for social and health care services for the elderly, the disabled, and low-income families.

2001-2003 Operating Budget



Functional Area

\$ In Thousands

Public Schools	\$9,903,086
Human Services	7,415,303
Higher Education	2,800,460
Special Approps*	1,611,095
Govt. Operations	392,304
Natural Resources	355,477
Legislative	133,124
Judicial	71,679
Other Education	59,988
Transportation	40,722

Courtesy Office of Program Research

* Special appropriations are largely comprised of interest on debts and bonds along with assistance provided to local governments.

Before September 11th, a short economic downturn in 2002 was expected with a return to strong economic growth in 2003. However, the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania, directly impacted our local economy in unforeseen ways and made the recession more pronounced. Immediately following September 11th, Boeing announced drastic cuts of up to 30,000 employees. The effect of these layoffs, as well as losses in the high-tech and other sectors is a projected loss of over \$813 million in revenues through next year.

Additionally, state costs have risen dramatically over those approved in last year's budget. Education costs have risen be-

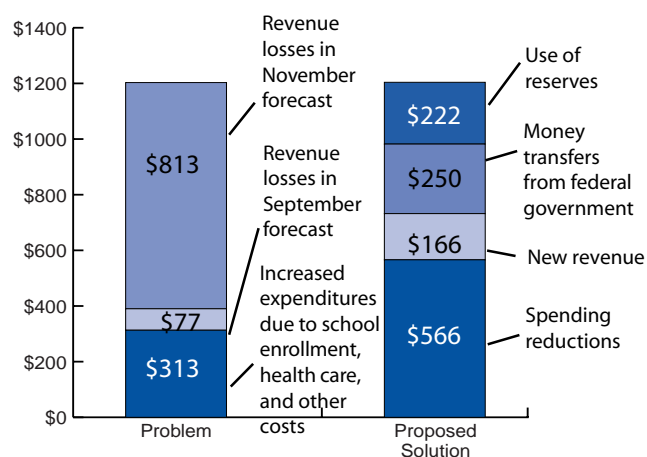
cause fewer students are dropping out and enrollments are higher than projected. Higher than expected Department of Corrections caseloads, heavy costs incurred from this past summer's forest fires, rising medical costs and lawsuits against the state are also contributing to our current budget shortfall. To balance the budget, significant reductions must be made in the budget we approved just last year.

THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL

On December 18th, the Governor unveiled his proposed 2002 Supplemental Budget. The Governor's budget addresses the \$1.2 billion budget gap with:

- New budget reductions of \$566 million;
- New revenue increases of \$166 million;
- Additional money transfers of \$250 million; and
- Using \$222 million from reserve funds.

Governor's Proposed Supplemental Budget



Courtesy Senate Committee Services

Cuts to Social and Health Services

To ensure this year's budget does not exceed projected revenues, the governor's budget proposes reductions approximating \$235 million in social and health services. Many of these reductions will have significant impacts on access to quality medical and other services, and will be the topic of intense discussions during the upcoming session. Proposed reductions include lowering Medicaid payments to pharmacies, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes; a reduction in community mental health services; and lower funding for several programs designed to serve at-risk youth. Some programs in the juvenile and criminal justice system will be eliminated or reduced sharply including: efforts to reduce truancy, the elimination of the Mission Creek Youth Camp for juvenile offenders, and funding for child care services.

Report to the 32nd District

Other key measures to decrease costs include requiring state employees to pay more of their own health insurance premiums, trimming funding for higher education (while giving institutions the authority to raise tuition to compensate for lost funds), cutting a limited amount of funding from several K-12 grant programs, and closing the Washington State Library.

The governor’s proposal would eliminate \$84.6 million in funds local governments have received from the state since the passage of Initiative 695. These funds replaced money lost when voters approved I-695. These cuts will affect many critical government services such as law enforcement, fire departments, and human services.

All of the proposed cuts are painful, and each will be carefully reviewed by the Legislature along with a variety of alternatives to achieve the needed funding reductions. It will be a difficult process. I welcome your ideas and suggestions as we move forward. With your help, we will try to make the necessary cuts in a manner that does not harm our most vulnerable citizens.

Increases on “Sin Taxes”

The governor’s budget also includes several recommendations designed to increase revenues by raising so-called “sin taxes” on card rooms, pull-tabs, punchboards, and liquor. Additionally, the governor’s budget proposal advocates that Washington join the “Big Game” multi-state lottery, a proposal that could generate up to \$25 million for the state. The governor also is recommending that the state seek additional compensation from the federal government to cover nursing home and other services for the elderly provided by the state.

Local schools earn awards for reading improvements

We have passed several reforms in recent years that have placed heavy demands on our elementary schools. Many of our local schools have risen to the challenge and met those goals. One crucial standard that we sought at the Legislature was for schools to reach a 25% reduction within three years in the number of 4th graders failing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning test. Many schools have made great strides through the efforts of teachers, administrators, staff, and of course, students and parents.

Below is a list of some of the schools in and around our community that have earned the Award of Reading Achievement this year.

Shoreline School District:	Seattle School District:	Northshore School District:
Meridian Park	Broadview/Thompson	Arrowhead
Brookside	Viewlands	Moorlands
North City	North Beach	
Echo Lake		
Parkwood		
Highland Terrace		
Lake Forest Park		
Ridgecrest		
Sunset		
Melvin G Syre		

Congratulations to each of these schools, and kudos to the many individuals who are working in every school to make each child a success.

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Rep. Ruth Kagi!

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